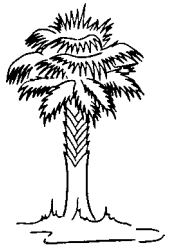
Chapter 3



GUIDELINES FOR ELECTIVE COURSES

The *South Carolina Social Studies Curriculum Standards* identifies four major content areas for state assessment: history, government, geography, and economics. As a field of study, however, social studies, is drawn from many academic disciplines and areas of social concern. A number of those disciplines and areas provide popular social studies elective courses at the middle and high school levels. This chapter—whose sections are "Psychology," "Sociology," "Law-Related Education," "Anthropology," and "Science, Technology, and Society"—provides some guidelines for teaching and learning in the schools with regard to these elective social studies courses.

Psychology

Perspectives

An understanding of psychology gives students self-knowledge and insights into the behavior of others, both as individuals and as participants in various social contexts. As with the other areas of study examined in these standards, a set of process skills is also central to the teaching and study of psychology. These process skills revolve around the application of the scientific method to psychological questions. Thus a course in psychology should include the following areas of study: the application of scientific method in psychology, human growth and development, cognition and learning, personality, mental health and behavioral disorders, and social psychology (Baum and Cohen 1989).

Writing for the American Psychological Association's Committee on Psychology in the Secondary Schools, Cynthia Baum and Ira Cohen (1989) recommend that in developing a course of study in psychology, the educator should consider the following major objectives:

- Students should study the major core concepts and theories of psychology. They should be able to define key terms and to use these terms in their everyday vocabulary. Students should also be able to compare and contrast major themes in psychology.
- Students should understand the basic skills of psychological research. They should be able to devise simple research projects, interpret and generalize from results, and evaluate the general validity of research reports.
- Students should be able to apply psychological concepts to their own lives. They should be able to recognize psychological principles when they encounter them in everyday situations.
- Students should develop critical thinking skills. They should become aware of the danger of blindly accepting or rejecting any theory of human nature and institutions without careful, objective evaluation.
- Students should build their reading, writing, and discussion skills.

- Students should learn about the ethical standards governing the work of psychologists. They should maintain high ethical standards and sensitivity in applying the principles of psychology to themselves, other people, and other organisms.

More specifically, the NCSS argues in its *Expectations of Excellence: Curriculum Standards for Social Studies* (1994) that social studies programs at the high school level should include experiences that provide for the study of individual development and identity so that the learner can

- articulate personal connections to time, place, and social/cultural systems;
- identify, describe, and express appreciation for the influences of various historical and contemporary cultures on an individual's daily life;
- describe the ways that family, religion, gender, ethnicity, nationality, socioeconomic status, and other group and cultural influences contribute to the development of a sense of self;
- apply concepts, methods, and theories about the study of human growth and development, such as physical endowment, learning, motivation, behavior, perception, and personality;
- examine the interactions of ethnic, national, or cultural influences in specific situations or events;
- analyze the role of perceptions, attitudes, values, and beliefs in the development of personal identity;
- compare and evaluate the impact of stereotyping, conformity, acts of altruism, and other behaviors on individuals and groups;
- work independently and cooperatively within groups and institutions to accomplish goals; and
- examine factors that contribute to and damage one's mental health and analyze issues related to mental health and behavioral disorders in contemporary society.

Teaching methods used in psychology classes should actively involve students in the learning process. Baum and Cohen recommend a variety of methods, including direct instruction, discussion, inquiry, audiovisual presentation, case history analysis, role playing, simulation, fieldwork, demonstrations, experiments, research projects, and writing assignments.

The following components can be used to aid in the planning and implementation of a psychology course.

Course Description

Psychology is the science of behavior and mental processes. This course should acquaint students with the basic psychological theories and tools of analysis. Students are exposed to the psychological assumptions, principles, and phenomena associated with each of the major subfields within psychology. They also learn about the methods that psychologists use in the practice of their science.

Student Objectives

- The student will begin to examine human behavior.
- The student will identify various methods and measuring tools used by psychologists.
- The student will trace the historical development of psychology.
- The student will explore major psychological theories and theorists.
- The student will compare and contrast significant prominent therapeutic approaches.

- The student will examine a variety of topics common to the study of psychology, such as memory, perception, learning, motivation, emotions, personality theories, and stress.
- The student will analyze the human brain and neurological physiology as it applies to behavior (normal and abnormal), learning, addiction, and emotions.
- The student will assess his or her own behavioral patterns.
- The student will explore his or her own motivation, goals, fears, developmental patterns, and value structure.

> *I have made a ceaseless effort not to ridicule, not to bewail, not to scorn human actions, but to understand them.*
>
> —Benedict de Spinoza

Topics of study that a typical secondary-level psychology course might include:

- the methods, approaches, history of psychology;
- the biological bases of behavior;
- sensation and perception;
- states of consciousness;
- learning;
- cognition;
- motivation and emotion;
- developmental psychology;
- personality;
- testing and individual differences;
- abnormal psychology;
- the treatment of psychological disorders; and
- social psychology.

Sociology

Perspectives

Sociologist Paul S. Gray defines his science as "the study of human groups, their formation and functioning." (Gray 1989, 72). Sociologists search for empirical and theoretical generalizations about groups and the institutions humans create. In that search, sociologists employ the scientific method. A well-designed high school sociology course might address sociological inquiry, socialization, social organization, deviance and social control, collective behavior, social stratification, the family, education and social change (Gray 1993). Gray submits that a high school course in sociology might consider the following goals:

- Creating an awareness of culture, in general, and American culture in particular; fostering understanding of the subcultures among us.
- Creating an appreciation of the process of socialization (learning the rules necessary to function in society); examining the various agents of socialization and the potential consequences of changes occurring in the socialization process.
- Exploring dilemmas of freedom and justice in society. How far should we go in creating equality of opportunity for everyone?
- Establishing criteria for evidence and proof in making an argument; understanding that ideas with which we disagree may nonetheless be expressed skillfully and effectively.
- Placing the study of American social problems and institutions in a worldwide, comparative context; emphasizing cultural relativity. (Gray 1989)

In *Expectations of Excellence*, the NCSS argues that social studies programs at the high school level should include experiences that provide for the study of interactions among individuals, groups, and institutions so that the learner can

- apply concepts such as role, status, and social class in describing the connections and interactions of individuals, groups, and institutions in society;
- analyze group and institutional influences on people, events, and elements of culture in both historical and contemporary settings;
- describe the various forms that institutions take, and explain how they develop and change over time;
- identify and analyze examples of tensions between expressions of individuality and efforts used to promote social conformity by groups and institutions;
- describe and examine belief systems basic to specific traditions and laws in contemporary and historical movements;
- evaluate the role of institutions in furthering both continuity and change;
- analyze the extent to which groups and institutions meet individual needs and promote the common good in contemporary and historical settings, and explain and apply ideas and modes of inquiry drawn from behavioral science and social theory in the examination of persistent issues and social problems.

The best sociology courses allow students to become actively involved in the analysis of sociological data to illustrate concepts, define trends, test hypotheses, and form their own generalizations.

The following components can be used to aid in the planning and implementation of a sociology course.

Course Description

Sociology is the study of human behavior in group situations. Its focus is on the dynamics of group behavior and the interaction of individuals in groups. This course acquaints students with the basic sociological theories and tools of analysis and shows their relationship to other behavioral science disciplines such as anthropology and psychology. Social stratification, sexism, ageism, racism, and other social issues will be considered. Additionally the class will examine the effect of social structure, practices, and institutions upon the individual in everyday life.

Student Objectives

- The student will discuss sociology as a behavioral science and be exposed to the development and characteristics of sociology.
- The student will identify the devices, tools, and methods of research that sociologists utilize (surveys, polls, demographic information, statistics, and the Internet).
- The student will recognize how values, norms, and sanctions influence the individual and examine ways in which cultures differ, change, and resist change.
- The student will assess antisocial behaviors, such as crime, social deviance, addiction, and terrorism.
- The student will evaluate how culture affects his or her personality.
- The student will describe the cycle of human life, including birth, childhood, adolescence, adulthood, parenthood, middle age, and late adulthood and examine the topics of parenting, aging, and death and dying.
- The student will discuss and evaluate topics concerning human groups, social stratification, gender roles, microcultures, population, and human ecology.
- The student will analyze the family structure and functions, such as marriage, roles, divorce, and changing family patterns.

- The student will explain the need and purpose of social systems and institutions, such as prisons, schools, governments, and religions.
- The students will examine forms of collective behavior such as mobs, riots, fads, social movements, public opinion, and mass communications.
- The student will examine major social issues facing modern society.

Topics of study that a typical secondary-level sociology course might include:

- an introduction to sociology;
- culture: variation, adaptation, conformity, deviance, and social control;
- socialization: creating the person;
- the life span: adolescence, adulthood, old age, death and dying;
- interactions: from couples to corporations;
- stratification and social mobility;
- microcultures;
- racism and ethnocentrism;
- gender and sexism;
- the family;
- social institutions: education and religion;
- economic and political institutions;
- social movements and the nature of social change; and
- social issues in modern society.

Law-Related Education

Perspectives

In a 1978 report to the federal government, national leaders in law-related education (LRE) described their field of teaching as centering in "those organized learning experiences that provide students . . . the knowledge and understanding, skills, attitudes and appreciations necessary to respond effectively to the law and legal issues in our complex and changing society" (cited in Arbetman et al. 1994, 3). LRE courses such as "Practical Law" and "Street Law" attempt to teach students how the legal system functions, how law affects them, and how they can affect the law. "LRE is the practical application of law to daily living" (Arbetman et al. 1994, 3).

As LRE is explained in *Street Law: A Course in Practical Law* (McMahon, O'Brien, and Arbetman 1994), a text developed by the National Institute for Citizen Education in the Law, its central goals are to

- provide a practical understanding of law and the legal system which will be of use to students in their everyday lives;
- improve understanding of the fundamental principles and values underlying our Constitution, laws, and legal system;
- promote awareness of current issues and controversies relating to law and the legal system;
- encourage effective citizen participation in our legal system;
- develop skills to resolve disputes through informal and, where necessary, formal resolution mechanisms;
- improve basic skills including critical thinking and reasoning, communication, observation and problem solving;
- provide an opportunity to consider and clarify attitudes toward the role that law, lawyers, law enforcement officers, and the legal system play in our society; and
- provide an opportunity for exposure to the many vocational opportunities that exist within the legal system.

Course Description

Research conducted by the Social Science Education Consortium and the Center for Action Research suggests that LRE programs, when properly conducted, can reduce tendencies toward delinquent behavior and improve a range of attitudes related to responsible citizenship. This research suggests that several features are critical to successful LRE programs:

- classroom use of outside resource persons;
- sufficient quantity and quality of instruction (i.e., at least a semester of instruction or careful integration of LRE content and strategies into year-long courses);
- balanced selection of case materials (i.e., balance between those cases that, when analyzed, should lead to respect for the law and those that should lead to constructive criticism about its application);
- teaching strategies that foster true interaction among students;
- involvement of important school administrators (particularly the building principal); and
- availability and use by teachers of professional peer support.

The content covered in LRE typically includes

- an introduction to and overview of the law and legal system;
- the criminal and juvenile justice system, including coverage of the various kinds of crime, and the operation of the criminal justice system;
- consumer law, including consumer rights, legal elements of sales, contracts, and credit;
- family law;
- housing law; and
- individual rights and liberties, including First Amendment rights, privacy, due process, and equality under the law.

LRE advocates the use of a wide variety of teaching approaches, including electronic and multimedia materials, case studies, role-playing, conflict-resolution strategies, community resources (particularly human resources), field trips, and mock trials. All are designed to promote active learning on the part of students. Problem-solving and critical thinking skills are emphasized.

Frederick Rodgers A. (1991) suggests that five critical thinking skills should serve as a guide for developing LRE instructional content and procedures:

- the ability to define a problem;
- the ability to select pertinent information for the solution of a problem;
- the ability to recognize stated and unstated assumptions;
- the ability to formulate and select relevant and promising hypotheses; and
- the ability to draw conclusions validly and to judge the validity of inferences.

Sample Activities

Case studies are one of the more powerful techniques used in LRE classes. The following explanation of the case study is taken from *Street Law: A Course in Practical Law:* "An integral part of law-related education is the case study method. Case studies require students to analyze problem situations and reach their own conclusions concerning the outcome. Case studies can take many forms, including: legal cases based on written opinions of courts, hypothetical situations involving some conflict or dilemma and real life situations drawn from newspapers, magazines, books or other sources. While case studies are generally presented in written form, they can also be presented by use of an audiovisual medium such as a movie or tape recording" (Arbetman et al 1994, 9–10).

Purpose

The case study method is an inquiry-oriented technique that is designed to help students apply legal theory to real life situations. Since the legal rule or authority that applies to a particular problem is not provided, students are forced to explore their own ideas and conclusions. This process helps arouse students' interest and develops their skills in logic, independent analysis, critical thinking, and decision-making.

Procedure

1. Select the case materials: cases may be real or hypothetical, long or short, based on written opinions of a court or derived from an everyday situation.

2. Review the facts: the facts of the case serve as the basis for classroom discussion; therefore, the inquiry process should be started by carefully reviewing and clarifying all of the facts. Students should be asked
   - What happened in this case?
   - Who are the parties?
   - What facts are important? Unimportant?
   - Is there any significant information missing?
   - Why did the people involved act the way they did?

3. Frame the issue: students should pinpoint and discuss the issues or problems presented by the case. An issue should be posed in the form of a question. While most cases revolve around a legal issue, students should also consider issues of public policy, ethics, and practical reality.

> *A city is a place where there is no need to wait for next week to get the answer to a question, to taste the food of any country, to find new voices to listen to and familiar ones to listen to again.*
>
> —Margaret Mead

4. Discuss the arguments: once students have focused on the issues, they should develop and discuss the arguments that can be made for and against each of the various points of view. When discussing the arguments, students should consider questions such as
   - What are the arguments in favor of and against each point of view?
   - Which arguments are most persuasive? Least persuasive? Why?
   - What might be the consequences of each course of action: To the parties? To society?
   - Are there any alternatives?

   In discussing the various arguments it is important to foster a climate of acceptance and openness. Students must know that all shades of opinion are welcome and that their ideas will receive a fair hearing and analysis, no matter how controversial or touchy the issue. In other words, students should be encouraged to listen to, consider, and evaluate all points of view.

5. Reach a decision: a decision is the answer to the issue or issues posed by the case. When students are given the decision, as in a court case, they should be asked to evaluate it. Do they agree or disagree with it? What will the decision mean for the parties? For society? In some cases the decision will not be given and students should be asked to reach their own decision. For example, students might be asked how would they decide this case and why? After the students have reached their own conclusions, the teacher can tell them the actual result or holding in the case, at which point students can compare their own result to that of the court.

6. Variations: when conducting a case study, the teacher may wish to try one of the variations on the case method. Typical variations include
   - Giving students an entire case (i.e., facts, issues, arguments, decision, and reasoning). This approach focuses on students' identification and comprehension of the facts, issues, decision, and student evaluation of the decision and the court's reasoning.
   - Giving students unmarked opinions (i.e., facts, issues, arguments, and unmarked judicial opinions). When this approach is used, students are not told which of the court opinions is the actual holding of the court. Rather, they are asked to select the opinion they agree with and explain why. Later they can be given the actual holding and can be asked to compare their own reasoning and result against that of the court.
   - Giving students only the facts. When this approach is used, students are asked to identify and formulate the issues, prepare arguments on each side, develop a decision, and then evaluate their issues, arguments, and decision against the actual holding of the court. (Arbetman et al 1994).

I am too much a skeptic to deny the possibility of anything.
— Thomas Henry Huxley

Anthropology

Perspectives

Jane J. White, of the Department of Instruction and Teacher Education at the University of South Carolina, has asserted that "The central goal of anthropology is to explain why groups of people are different from each other: to explain why they have different physical characteristics, speak different languages, use different technologies and why they think, believe and act so differently" (White 1989, 31).

Yet even though groups of people are different from each other, they also share similarities. The science of anthropology also seek to understand the common elements of humanity. Anthropologist Jack Ellison wrote in 1960: "One value of [anthropology] is that it is concerned with the most basic human relationships and institutions: parent-child relationships, the family, marriage, death, growing up, man and the unknown, man and the physical environment, man's relationship to other men. A cross-cultural study of societies which have developed outside the orbit of Western civilization enables the students to see how differently various societies have structured these relationships and, at the same time, to observe the recurrent individual and social needs which must be met" (Ellison 1960, 327).

General anthropology today seeks to answer major questions such as

- What is the relationship of people in a primitive state to the emergence of civilization?
- How do the works of early humans bridge the gap between prehistoric and historic cultures?
- In what ways is the diversity of languages related to the distribution and affinities of peoples and their cultures? (Rice 1993)

Anthropology is subdivided into four main areas:

- Physical anthropology is the study of the physical characteristics and social behavior of humans in the past as well as present.
- Archaeology is the study of the material remains of cultures.

- Anthropological linguistics is the study of how groups of people use language.
- Cultural anthropology is the description of different groups' ways of life.

The NCSS recommends in *Expectations of Excellence* that social studies programs at the high school level include experiences that provide for the study of culture and cultural diversity:

- analyzing and explaining the ways groups, societies, and cultures address human needs and concerns;
- predicting how data and experiences may be interpreted by people from diverse cultural perspectives and frames of reference;
- applying an understanding of culture as an integrated whole that explains the functions and interactions of language, literature, the arts, traditions, beliefs and values, and behavior patterns;
- comparing and analyzing societal patterns for preserving and transmitting culture while adapting to environmental or social change;
- discussing cultural diversity, as well as cohesion, within and across groups;
- interpreting patterns of behavior reflecting values and attitudes that contribute or pose obstacles to cross-cultural understanding;
- constructing reasoned judgments about specific cultural responses to persistent human issues; and
- explaining and applying ideas, theories, and modes of inquiry drawn from anthropology and sociology in the examination of persistent issues and social problems.

Course Description

Topics of study that a typical secondary-level anthropology course might include:

- an introduction to anthropology,
- prehistory,
- culture,
- the effects of culture,
- tools,
- technology,
- economic systems,
- the family,
- other social systems and relationships,
- humankind and religion,
- language and speech, and
- humankind, art, and literature.

Science, Technology, and Society

Perspective

The integration of science, technology, and society (STS) into the social studies curriculum has received considerable attention due to the pervasive issues arising from our society's reliance on technology. A key component of STS is developing an understanding of the social changes and consequences associated with the introduction of technological advances. However, the power of technology is not absolute, and society plays a critical role in promoting public policy that supports or limits the role of science. The reciprocal interaction between technology and society is evidenced by the influence that society exerts on the pace of scientific inquiry by establishing controls on the allocation of resources and the development of regulations and policies.

In dealing with STS in the curriculum, social studies educators may approach this strand in one of three ways: infusing STS

into existing social studies courses, extending existing social studies units, or creating STS courses. Since the current curriculum is already overextended, it may be more reasonable to incorporate this perspective into existing curricula across all content areas and grade levels. Due to the vast amount of content that may be addressed under the auspices of STS, specific lists of standards seem unrealistic. An alternative approach that is more conducive to the widespread integration of STS involves the presentation of key concepts and generalizations that could be addressed in any social studies content area.

Key Concepts and Generalizations

The following concepts and generalizations may be incorporated within the other standards, regardless of grade level or subject:

- Society is becoming increasingly dependent on technology.
- Science and technology bring about expected and unexpected consequences that have an impact on historical events and on current political, social, and economic functioning worldwide.
- Social groups are differentially impacted by technological innovation.
- The values of a culture are reflected in their technological advancements.
- Technology often develops faster than the social institutions it affects.
- Technological innovations require trade-offs in the form of resource allocation and the development of regulations and policies.

The NCSS suggests in *Expectations of Excellence* that social studies programs include experiences that provide for the study of relationships among science, technology, and society so that learners at the various levels can achieve the following objectives.

Elementary school students should be able to

- identify and describe examples of areas in which science and technology have changed the lives of people, such as in homemaking, child care, work, transportation, and communications;
- identify and describe examples of situations in which science and technology have led to changes in the physical environment, such as the building of dams and levies, offshore oil drilling, the garnering of medicine from rain forests, and the loss of rain forests due to the extraction of resources;
- describe instances in which values, beliefs, and attitudes have changed as a result of new scientific and technological knowledge, such as the necessity of conserving natural resources and the awareness of chemicals harmful to life and the environment; and
- suggest ways to monitor science and technology in order to protect the physical environment, individual rights, and the common good.

Middle school students should be able to

- examine and describe the influence of culture on scientific and technological choices and advancement, such as in transportation, medicine, and warfare;
- show through specific examples how science and technology have changed people's perceptions of the social and natural world, such as in the relationship to the land, animal life, family life and economic needs, wants and security;
- describe instances in which values, beliefs, and attitudes have been influenced by new scientific and technological knowledge, such as the invention of the printing press,

conceptions of the universe, applications of atomic energy, and genetic discoveries;
- explain the need for laws and policies to govern scientific and technological applications, such as in the safety and well-being of workers and consumers and the regulation of utilities, radio, and television; and
- suggest ways to monitor science and technology in order to protect the physical environment, individual rights, and the common good.

High School students should be able to
- identify and describe both current and historical examples of the interaction and interdependence of science, technology, and society in a variety of cultural settings;
- analyze how science and technology have transformed the physical world and human society and our understanding of time, space, place, and human-environment interactions;
- analyze how science and technology influence the core values, beliefs, and attitudes of society and how core values, beliefs, and attitudes of society shape scientific and technological change;
- evaluate various policies that have been proposed as ways of dealing with social changes resulting from new technologies, such as genetically engineered plants and animals;
- recognize and interpret varied perspectives about human societies and the physical world using scientific knowledge, ethical standards, and technologies from diverse world cultures; and
- formulate strategies and develop policies for influencing public discussions associated with technology-society issues such as the greenhouse effect.

Thy skirts indead the foe may part,
Thy robe be pierced with sword and dart,
They shall not touch thy noble heart,
Carolina! Carolina!

—Henry Timrod